DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 384 JC 940 059

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TITLE Straightening the Pipeline: Helping Students Move More Efficiently and Effectively through the California Community Colleges.
INSTITUTION Community Coll. League of California, Sacramento. Commission on Educational Policy.
PUB DATE Nov 93
NOTE 10p.; Prepared by the Student Progress Task Force.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Academic Persistence; Ancillary School Services; *College Transfer Students; Community Colleges; *Educational Improvement; *Educational Needs; Educational Policy; School Surveys; Student Development; *Student Personnel Services; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS *California Community Colleges

ABSTRACT

In an effort to initiate discussion on how to promote student success in California's community colleges, and to suggest ways to remove barriers to students' educational progress, the Student Progress Task Force (SPTF) of the Community College League of California solicited information from students, faculty, administrators, and trustees. The SPTF gathered information on current strategies to support student progress; new strategies that would help remove barriers without spending more money or sacrificing quality; and resource persons, relevant literature, and programs offering additional ideas. Among the findings and conclusions of the SPTF were the following: (1) strategies to enhance student success fall into the four basic categories of matriculation; instructional support; student support; and tracking, intervention, and follow-up; (2) while a number of efforts to support student success were identified, few of the efforts have been effectively institutionalized and too few students receive the kind of support they require in order to succeed, primarily as a result of insufficient resources; and (3) suggestions from surveyed groups about strategies to improve student progress included improving the consistency of grading standards, providing in-service training to acquaint faculty with student support services available, and developing a better sense of community for students. A list of selected California Community College Fund for Instruction Improvement Projects, resource persons, and print resources; a copy of the SPTF questionnaire; and a list of colleges contacted are included. (PAA)

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STRAIGHTENING THE PIPELINE

HELPING STUDENTS MOVE MORE EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY THROUGH THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A REPORT PREPARED BY THE STUDENT PROGRESS TASK FORCE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

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NOVEMBER 1993

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INTRODUCTION

by:

Brad Reynolds, Lydia Ledesma, and Bill Cordero

This report was prepared by the CCLC Educational Policy Commission's Student Progress Task Force. *Straightening the Pipeline* was created to initiate discussion on how to enable students to move more efficiently and effectively through our community colleges and to suggest ways to remove barriers, real and imaginary, to their educational process and success. To achieve its objectives, the task force divided into subcommittees that discussed:

- current strategies to support student progress.
- what one could do to remove barriers ("bent areas of the pipe") without spending more money or sacrificing quality.
- what resource persons one might contact or what literature or programs one might examine to get additional ideas.

Each subcommittee solicited information from students, faculty, administrators, and trustees.

The task force members faced many dilemmas when discussing student progress. Indeed, progress and success are defined differently by many people and groups. An immigrant taking an English class, or a lifelong learner who drops in and out of college, might consider each class completed as making academic progress, whereas a state legislator, interested in data on institutional accountability, might define success or student progress in terms of transfer rates, student persistence, unit loads, and/or job training and placement.

The point is, there are many definitions for student progress and success. This brief report is not meant to end that debate but rather to suggest that while some things have been done to move our community college students more efficiently and quickly through our colleges while enhancing the basic goals of a college education, more can and should be done to straighten the pipeline.

CURRENT STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENT PROGRESS

by:
Mark Edelstein and Paul Berger

The California Community Colleges have developed a number of strategies over the years designed to enhance student success and support the progress of students toward their educational goals. The survey undertaken by the Student Progress Task Force reveals that those strategies fall into four basic categories:

- strategies related to matriculation
- strategies related to instructional support
- strategies related to student support
- strategies related to tracking, intervention, and follow-up

Strategies Related to Matriculation

All colleges are attempting to enhance student progress through improved systems of admissions, orientation, assessment, placement, and counseling. Colleges are working to improve the usefulness of Student Educational Plans, to expand advising through the use of faculty advisers, to offer admissions material in languages other than English, and to strengthen orientation sessions through the use of videos. Colleges are also using technology to facilitate counselor access to information on students and student access to information on requirements and articulation (e.g., ASSIST). Some colleges offer special workshops on financial aid, career opportunities, and transfer planning. Others require counseling for students on probation or students identified as "high risk". Specialized counselors at some institutions provide counseling specifically geared toward student athletes or particular academic disciplines. EOPS and DSPS provide special support services for qualified students.

Strategies Related to Instructional Support

Colleges are undertaking a wide range of instructional activities in support of direct classroom instruction. These include writing and mathematics labs, tutoring, and learning assistance centers as well as College Success classes and workshops on study skills, note taking, and other topics related to student success. Several colleges are targeting specific courses with low success rates and providing "supplemental instruction" for an entire class. Colleges are also encouraging students to assist each other by forming study groups, particularly for the more difficult courses. In the classroom itself, techniques of classroom-based research or assessment, which provide timely information to faculty about what students are actually learning and retaining, are another way of improving student success.

Strategies Related to Student Support

While many of the strategies in this category contain elements of instructional support (e.g., tutoring), student support strategies go beyond these to offer services such as counseling, mentoring, child support, and other forms of assistance. In addition to well-established programs, like EOPS and DSP&S, some colleges offer programs such as the Puente Project aimed at Mexican-American students and DARAJA aimed at African-American students. Transfer Centers at all colleges assist students, particularly those from underrepresented groups who intend to transfer to four-year institutions. Other programs are designed to meet the special needs of reentry women or single parents, and the Carl Perkins Vocational Education Act has funded a range of support programs for vocational students. Summer Bridge programs, which focus on encouraging and supporting potential students while they are still enrolled in the K-12 system, are also an effective means of enhancing success.

Strategies Related to Tracking, Intervention, and Follow-Up

While most colleges are not yet highly sophisticated in their ability to track individual students from application to transfer or job-placement and beyond, greater efforts are being made to track effectively so that appropriate interventions can occur and so that impediments to student success can be identified. Some colleges have established "early alert" programs to identify and assist students who are failing or who are not attending classes. Such programs sometimes include letters from the college or phone calls from faculty members to the students who are identified. The establishment of both local and statewide "accountability factors", including indicators of student success, should help to systematize the tracking and follow-up of students and encourage timely interventions.

Conclusion

Although the number of efforts to support student success is encouraging, it is clear that few of the efforts have been effectively institutionalized and that too few students receive the kind of support, encouragement, and assistance they require in order to succeed. In general, this has been due not to a lack of knowledge about which strategies are effective but to a lack of resources necessary to implement the strategies, or to an inability to restructure the organization of the college experience or to reallocate resources to those new strategies that are more effective than existing strategies or structures. As a result of this lack, a large proportion of students who enter the community colleges still leave without having fulfilled their original goals, and without, in some cases, having accepted personal responsibility for goal attainment.

NEW STRATEGIES TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO STUDENT PROGRESS WITHOUT SPENDING MORE MONEY OR SACRIFICING QUALITY: IF YOU COULD DO SOMETHING ADDITIONAL .....

by:

Larry Hendrick and Carole Currey

Given the current fiscal realities, program changes which are designed to promote student success will have to be funded by reallocating funds from other programs or low cost. When asked the question: "if you could do something additional at your institution to encourage student progress, acknowledging the fact that it could not require additional funding, what would it be?" The respondents tended to group their comments into three general areas.

The first of these areas revolves around practices related to prerequisites, placement, grading, and exit testing. This group of solutions are the most bureaucratic in nature and can be characterized as those which will improve student progress throughout the college by doing a more consistent job of matching student ability and class content level. In addition, improving the consistency of grading standards, particularly between faculty in the skills areas and within classes which are prerequisite classes, students will experience more successful progress.

Linking faculty with student services was a second group of suggestions. Primarily respondents would consider in-service training for faculty to acquaint them with the services available to students to support them. Presumably a faculty person would be better equipped to refer students for help when it was apparent that the student was floundering. Another suggestion was to link faculty and counselors directly to support a student who was at risk.

The largest group of suggestions related directly to the student. These can be characterized as "doing things that show we care." These involved encouraging faculty to consider retention strategies in the classroom; to help students develop study groups; to develop "student friendly" instruction. On a broader scale, it was suggested that a college might conduct a college-wide review of policies and processes to ensure that they reflect an attitude of caring for the student. Developing an environment that replicated the sense of community of a small liberal arts college was also suggested. Finally, recognizing the importance of family to the success of students; one respondent suggested involving significant others in support of a student's successful progress through the college.

There are likely many more examples of ways to improve student progress than were suggested by the sample. The significance of the responses is more in the areas that were mentioned than in the number of suggestions. Most of the responses directly reflected the growing recognition of how much student success is dependent on the general climate of the college. When students can see that the college and their instructors care about whether they succeed, they are more likely to progress through the college successfully.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

by:

Bob Barr and Dick Robertson

Members of the Community College League of California Educational Policy Commission Task Force on Student Progress surveyed colleagues on 48 campuses. Respondents cited numerous human and print resources pertinent to the issue of helping students move through the community college system.

Please note that the names included in the following resource and reference list were provided by survey respondents. These professional educators may well be unaware that their colleagues have identified them as particularly knowledgeable about student progress issues.

The print resources listed below came to the task force from survey respondents and from task force members themselves. An ERIC search and a survey of Fund for Instructional Improvement projects added reference titles.

SELECTED CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUND FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS -- 1985-93

1. Instructional Strategies for Improving Student Learning and Retention -- **Santa Barbara Community College District**

2. DARAJA Project: A Model for Retention and Transfer for Black Students -- **Chabot-Los Positas Community College District**

3. Co-operative Learning as a Format for a Developmental Math Curriculum -- **State Center Community College District**

4. Grossmont College Student Retention Program -- **Grossmont College**

5. Proposal to Replicate the Strategic Learning System of Johnson County Community College, Kansas -- **Kern County Community College District**

6. Learning Communities: A Project for Curricular Reform -- **College of the Sequoias**

7. S.U.C.E.S.S. Project for African-American Students -- **West Valley College**

INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED AS RESOURCE PERSONS

1. Marcia Albert -- **Oxnard College**
2. Mike Anker -- **California Community College Academic Senate**
3. Dorothy Bray -- **College of the Desert**
4. Jack Friedlander -- **Santa Barbara City College**
5. John Kangas -- **San Jose Evergreen College**
6. Merrilee Lewis -- **Palomar College**
7. Grace Mitchell -- **Cuesta College**
8. Lee Noel -- **Noel-Levitz Retention Services**
9. Uri Triesman -- **University of California at Berkeley**

PRINT RESOURCES

1. Opening the Door to College Success -- Karen Bergher, **Cuesta College**
2. The Fifth Dimension - by Peter Senge
3. "Schools Examine a Three-Year Path to a Degree", USA Today, April 20, 1993
4. New Directions for Community Colleges: Using Student Tracking Systems Effectively
   Trudy H. Bers, Editor Jossey-Bass, Inc. - San Francisco
5. "What is Student Success", by Avril Lovell, **Rancho Santiago College,** Interaction, Volume 3, #2 - Winter 1993, (Newsletter for the California Community College Council for Staff Development)

Appendix A: A copy of the questionnaire used by Task Force Members for the Survey of California Community Colleges.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA
EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMISSION

Student Progress Task Force Survey

Question 1: **How does your college define student progress and how do you measure or evaluate it?**

Question 2: **Will you please share with me three specific strategies at your institution which encourage student progress?**

Question 3: **If you could do something additional at your institution to encourage student progress, acknowledging the fact that it could not require additional funding, what would it be?**

Question 4: **Will you share with me any resources or references of which you are aware which relate to the topic "helping community college students to move through the system efficiently and effectively."**

Appendix B: List of colleges at which colleagues were contacted for this project.

Allan Hancock
American River
Antelope Valley
Bakersfield
Butte
Cabrillo
Cerritos
Cerro Cosco
College of the Canyons
College of the Redwoods
College of the Siskiyous
Compton
Cosumnes River
Cuesta
Cuyamaca
East Los Angeles
Educational Cultural Complex
El Camino
Feather River
Foothill
Fullerton
Gavilan
Glendale Community
Golden West
Grossmont
Hartnell
Imperial Valley
Lassen
Lake Tahoe
Los Angeles City
Los Angeles Harbor
Los Angeles Pierce
Los Angeles Trade-Tech
Los Angeles Valley
MiraCosta
Monterey Peninsula
Moorpark
Napa Valley
Orange Coast
Oxnard
Palomar
Pasadena City
Rio Hondo
Sacramento City
Saddleback
San Diego City
San Diego Community College District
San Diego Mesa
San Diego Miramar
San Jose City
Santa Barbara City
Santa Monica
Shasta
Southwestern
Taft
Ventura
Yuba